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THE CHANGING CONCEPTION OF "THE FACULTY" IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

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I.

The original faculty, and still the necessarily central faculty of Arts and Sciences,—the old "college faculty" with all that growth outward and upward has added—is as much as this short paper can sketch, even in bare outline. Within our generation it has greatly changed. It is our purpose to show not so much the history of that change, as the present situation and some of its implications.

The living root of the old faculty, as of every other part of the college, was a distinctively Christian impulse. It was the belief that in serving the cause of knowledge and truth by promoting liberal education men were serving the cause of Christ. Presidents, trustees and professors were alike to give themselves in self-denial to their several tasks, mindful that this holy ideal was to guide and ennoble their every effort. And the old root flowered many a time in lives of strength and loveliness that remain as the fairest memories of the older period. Yet perhaps the ideal was too high ever to be realized generally by men as men were and still are. Certainly it is an infinite pity that a narrow particularism, an insistence on the local and clannish, and a consequent sectarian warfare, somewhat mitigated by common sense and kindliness, so often disfigured the old college that its power for good was lessened. Let us make these abatements freely and yet gratefully remember that the old college faculty at least professed and tried to show that God is the end of all our knowing and that Christ is the Master of the Schools.

With this ideal, then as now, the fiercely practical side of our American temper was found to be at variance. The sense of achievement in visible things fought against faith in the invisible. A nation had been made and kept together. Society had been "installed over a vast continent." We were free, as few peoples were, from such fearful dangers as poverty, famine and invasion. Men could live free from fear. Careers were here for all who could make them. The elements of material good fortune were becoming ours beyond any measure known in history. And so the rival ideal of success, first in the outward and then in the sordid way, has been growing with our growth, feeding itself all the while on the old eternal human selfishness. It has of course been true at all times, and notably so in times of trial like the Revolution and Civil War, that the nobler side has asserted itself and that men in their thinking and doing "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." But the times of ease, plenty and self-indulgence have not been friendly to the old college ideal, any more than they are friendly to the homely virtues of simplicity, clear sincerity, scrupulous respect for the rights of others and modest independence.

Moreover, as is almost too obvious to need mention and yet so clamorously important as to need sure remembrance, our whole life, including its educational preparation, has been getting more and more complex and tense. The individual counts for less and less. The aggregate, whether organized in corporate form or disorganized in wild mob-like drifts of opinion and action, counts for more. To keep pace with our progress, to master the material of our lives so that the individual shall not be overwhelmed and crushed, some sort of organization becomes more and more imperative, if only that each man

may have a fair chance to get his own good by co-operating and sharing in the common good. And out of this state of things has come an impatient message to our larger universities first, and then to the lesser ones. It is that efficiency must be our watchword (and catchword), that education is a business, and that universities are corporations like banks, railroads, factories, department stores and insurance companies. Notice is being served that if our university faculties do not conform to this notion, they must give way to faculties that will. This is the message. What have we to say about it?

II.

Let us make some admissions. First of all, there has been a great deal of folly talked about the freedom of faculties and of individual professors. Would that the fact a man is a professor were sufficient proof that he is also a man of sense. Sometimes it is not even proof that he is a scholar. Before we talk of larger freedom, we must be sure in a given case that the individual professor, and in each faculty at least the strong majority, is fit to be free,—that is, sure to serve well the one supreme end for which professors and faculties legitimately exist. That end is intellectual and moral freedom, not for the professors alone, but for all others with whom they come in contact. It is a case where reciprocity is the only protection.

And so the actual assumption of responsibility for using this freedom well must come in to prove a man fit to be free—to temper the judgment, to make us wise in counsel, considerate in action, tactful in winning men, swift to help and slow to harm the university we represent. If no professor proposed a resolution

in faculty, I will not say unless it were sensible, but unless he were man enough to see it through in execution, taking the blame for failure and letting whoever would do so lay claim to the glory in case of success, we should then see a faculty undeniably fit for the widest freedom,—an irresistible engine for the best work. So, too, if no professor coveted notoriety or lowered the academic tone of his lectures to attract attendance and applause, whether by exploiting some novelty or serving up the things of superficial charm to please idle hearers, how much more boldly could we demand more freedom for each as well as for all. Plain common sense, open-eyed sympathy, tolerance, modesty, balance,—these are some of the old undramatic virtues needed as guarantees that the free professor or the free faculty will be beneficently free. And yet let us not admit too much in this connection, for the fact that American faculties are not stronger in these virtues, and consequently deserving of more freedom, is not first of all the fault of our faculties, but of the presidents and trustees who choose them, or else the fault of insufficient resources.

Secondly, we must admit that universities are corporations and that education is a business. Let us do so heartily. Is it not time we got away from hand-to-mouth living and rule-of-thumb reckoning, and recognized that business has its laws and that experts must conduct it? Under American conditions the management of a large university requires some stable corporate base in the form of trustees or regents, and one executive head, a president. Unless we are to go wavering and drifting, the primacy of president and trustees must be maintained. We cannot in this imitate any old-world system.

It is an immense gain that most of our universities are now so well managed on the business side. The wisdom of their investments has made more than one university treasurer's report a guide to prudent investors outside. The very complexities and annoyances in the terms of gifts and endowments, the variety of accounts and securities and the calculation of probable revenues on less certain bases than many business enterprises possess have evoked surprising wisdom. The net result has been that our leading universities, so far as their hampering conditions permit, usually make every dollar do its work. Would any man in his senses suppose that American faculties could or would do as well?

Then the same corporation must use business sense in creating and maintaining a faculty. The best professors procurable for the terms that can be offered, selection and promotion on recommendation of the president, and the unifying of educational policy by means of the same sole executive head, are necessities of our situation. In all this our universities have been learning the lessons of modern business efficiency.

III.

Nevertheless, if this is the sum of the proposition that university education is a business, our faculties are in a bad way, because it means the destruction of their intellectual and moral freedom by reason of the substitution of commercial for academic standards. That this is the chief menace at the present time to the self-respect and usefulness of our professors and faculties must be evident to all who know them. It is of course quite possible that we are in a transitional period, and that our

faculties are moving with an inevitable trend of events. That, however, remains to be seen. But if it is so, we may be sure of one other thing, and that is a progressive impairing of academic standards and an ensuing degradation of our faculties to the condition of mere employees. So far as this happens, universities cease living and begin dying. To avert such a result, or even the slightest menace of it, must we not then fight again the old fight for our academic birthright, and take part anew in the μάχη ἀθάνατος for a reasonable freedom, intellectual and moral, personal and collective. Can university professors who are men give any but one answer to such a question?

The trouble with the theorem "education is a business" is that it is only a preliminary half-truth,—the half-truth which, however, fills the eye and mind of our business men. The truth in it is that business method is the means, but not the end of education. The other and better half is that "the business of a university is education,"—the half which makes the first half valuable. And while the trouble in professors is that they are too often pitiably ignorant of the wholesome laws of business, the mate to this fact is that the business world is almost wholly ignorant of the laws of education. "Your plant is idle in the summer," said a British manufacturer to an Oxford professor. "You ought to put on a shift of men for that job." "The trouble with your plant," said one of our captains of industry lately, "is that your output will not stand business tests. Every boy you graduate ought to be your standard finished product. Otherwise you should discard him early in the course as waste." "Suppose it happens to be your boy," he was asked. "And suppose this sample of waste turns out later to be a valuable by-

product, or even the real thing. What then?" His answer was a prompt and creditable "I don't know." The region of his ignorance included the domain of college education. If then it be true that the very training which makes a man a professor dims his business faculties, is it not fully as true that the training which absorbs the life of a business man blinds his educational perceptions? How else, then, can this conscious or unconscious antagonism be mediated except by recognizing that each has a lawful hemisphere? The hemisphere of business is secure enough from invasion, but for the hemisphere of education we badly need a new Monroe Doctrine.

Let us stick to our text that the one business of a university is education. It will then be clear that the character and extent of business methods allowable in conducting a university must be governed by the kind of business to be conducted. It will also be clear that while the trustees or regents must strive to hold the university faithful to its trust and to secure what will make it efficient in its every part, the faculty alone is the body capable, or to be made capable, of the conduct of all educational business according to educational standards. The first dangerous invasion of commercialism is naturally made upon the corporation, the body which connects the university with the outside practical world, the body which is therefore most accessible to attack. One and another trustee in the laudable desire for efficiency is apt to think first of the efficiency with which he is most familiar, the efficiency of the bank, the railroad, the business house. Under this impulse he unconsciously veers away from the academic point of view. Soon others turn away; enough to make a working majority, and naturally the first point of common convergence is in centralizing the deliberative

as well as active functions of the university, including much of the proper business of the faculty, and even of the trustees or regents, in the person of one head officer—the president.

I believe most firmly in high powers and, in grave emergencies, irresistible powers for every university president, in quick control of everything at short range. But that is one thing, a safe and wise thing, provided always it is done in the environment of open inspection, quick accountability, close participation of all competent members of boards and faculties, and the most scrupulous jealousy in maintaining for everyone the utmost freedom of initiative, both in speech and action, that can be used with loyalty. Otherwise, so far as sharing in the common business goes, and so far as personal usefulness is concerned, we make boards and faculties personally and collectively less efficient for the very end they are created to promote, and not the advantages but the abuses of the business world are ominously repeated in the form of "dummy" trustees and "dummy" professors.

IV.

The profound change, then, now in progress in our American faculties is in the relation of the faculty to the president. The tendency borrowed from the business world, and increasing with the number of persons in the faculty, is toward individual and collective dependence on the president. And yet, so far as this does not curtail the self-respect of honorable professors by abridging their freedom to teach what they really believe, or to take part fully in the business of the faculty without prejudice to their standing or livelihood, even if they do not happen to agree in one or

another important matter with the president, then, whatever is to be said against this increasing dependence as a danger to efficiency, it cannot be criticised as an attack on personal freedom. And it is here we think the test should be found as to what constitutes a professor's reasonable freedom. For, after all, the university must pull together, or it will pull apart. And though the head is not the whole body or the major part of the body, the academic body, like the human, must have a head, unless it is to be a lifeless trunk, and only one head, unless it is to be a monstrosity.

Is there anything, then, that needs to be suggested in order that the faculty, keeping to its own function and showing loyal deference to its head, may be kept from deterioration as the sole organ whose function it is actually to conduct university education efficiently. Let us examine some of the suggestions that have been made:

1. That the president, as the responsible head, should initiate all important measures of educational policy. This means that he initiates such measures either alone, or by putting them in operation by the action of the corporation and thus imposing them on the faculty, or by introducing them in faculty after shaping them in conference with a committee of the faculty, or by proposing them first in open faculty. There is something to be said for even this extreme view. It is that the university has one clear policy and that the president has untrammeled opportunity with practically exclusive responsibility for doing whatever he thinks should be done. Let us take a daring step and go so far as to say that there may be momentous occasions when the president must "go it alone" or face an absolute *impasse*. Let us trust such occasions may

not occur, nor even occasions when the corporation and president may come to feel they must join to impose unwelcome laws on reluctant faculties. Such situations merely argue a university to be in a very bad way.

Introducing measures of policy after shaping them in a committee or department does of course recognize that there is value in expert counsel, and introduction in open faculty recognizes and welcomes the help and advice of all. These are natural methods for any president who wishes his policies to be understood by his colleagues, and the latter method is the one which insures the most cordial assent and in the long run the greatest efficiency, though it must be confessed the penalty is sometimes the long suffering endurance of professors who "darken counsel by words without knowledge." When the first reference of a measure is made from the faculty to its committee for digestion and formulation, rather than by first reference of measures in pre-digested form from the president and a committee to the faculty, both the sense of freedom and of responsibility are quickened in the minds of the faculty as in no other way. Yet whichever of these various modes the president may use, the general thesis that the president should initiate all important measures of policy has more against it than for it. Every measure thus proposed becomes an administration measure and seems to challenge at the outset the loyalty and security of every one who may not be able to agree with it. In such circumstances the free utterance of real opinion, unless it happens to be in substantial accord with the measure proposed, becomes almost impossible. Self criticism is one of the necessary educational functions of a university in order that all its measures may have the preliminary test as to whether or no they

are well-considered on all sides and will work well when put in operation. Whenever for any reason the atmosphere of a faculty room is not friendly to this free utterance, the results are sure to be disheartening. Some professors will develop a cynical disregard of their duty to speak what they think, the weaker ones will be constrained to evasion or even official hypocrisy, and all will exhibit in varying degrees a loss of interest in the welfare of the university except in so far as their own personal fortunes are affected. This turns professors into place-holders and place-hunters. The logical end is the destruction of responsibility and consequently of interest on the part of the faculty in the important measures of policy on which the higher welfare of the university depends. Need it be added, by way of warning to those who believe in subjecting universities to the standards of the business world, that a faculty thus circumstanced is bound to become increasingly inefficient, and also unattractive to the best professors.

2. There is the suggestion of dual control by the president and faculty. This seems to me worse than the former; for if the one seems to spell autocracy, the other spells weakness and discord. In case the president is a strong man, it means ceaseless friction between him and an oligarchy of professors. If he is a weak man, it means the presidency is reduced to a chairmanship by courtesy. In either event it means structural weakness in the university and an unsteady attitude which keeps producing trouble inside and distrust outside.

3. Some may perhaps favor the idea of faculty ascendancy. For us Oxford and Cambridge are its best examples. The professors there are virtually their own trustees and they choose their own Vice-Chancellor. The

plan has one very great advantage—personal freedom in a higher degree than is known in our faculties or even in Germany. But let any one who would introduce it here remember the abysmal differences that yawn between that situation and ours. Oxford and Cambridge are indeed more democratic in the matter of professorial freedom than we are. But it is a democratic freedom that rests upon an aristocratic presupposition, a freedom of the professorial caste resting on a tradition sanctioned by centuries of privilege, checked and counter-checked by the balancing of intercollegiate rivalry, and issuing in restriction of all initiative to a small council, elected, to be sure, but so constituted as to be changeable only very slowly. Admirably in accord as it is with the stable and soberly balanced love of liberty, "broadening slowly down from precedent to precedent," that has made England great, it is not a faculty model that can be reproduced here. But may it never perish there!

4. There remains to be considered what can be done under our own conditions to invigorate and perfect the faculty, not only to save it from the subtle poison of commercialism, but to make it do its educational business efficiently with full self-respect and in sure harmony with the president and corporation. I believe the one thing to be done is to revive in full power the democracy of the faculty, with its free president honored supremely and followed steadily as the one natural as well as official leader of free professors. Only by following this path shall we be enabled to avoid the rank commercialism which believes in its heart that a university is something like a store where the trustees are the proprietors, the president the manager, the professors the employees, and the students the capricious customers.

And here we have to stop a moment to notice a futile remedy that appears in many forms. It is the remedy of committees and departments and councils and senates. We are organized to death. It is the "worship of machinery" all over again. Of course these things have constant and even indispensable uses. Of course we must know where things are, or we shall never find them. For the routine business, the ever recurring humdrum task, the mechanics and economics of our work, we shall always be needing these things,—but always as our servants, never as our masters. If behind the complex of our committees we do not have the watchful criticism and active co-operation of the whole faculty,—if the faculty does not really understand what its agents are doing, or what their measures mean, then the committees are virtually the faculty, and the faculty becomes little more than a listless and dwindling audience. This may possibly do well enough for routine business, but never for the understanding or co-operative execution of a great policy. For unless a faculty actually controls all its parts and agencies, it cannot do its business in the best way, nor can it long maintain its just freedom.

Let us face the situation. American faculties are weaker than they ought to be, so far as concerns their power to maintain educational standards and to perform their own educational business. Their great growth has called for better organization, but organization has progressed too much without regard to the fact that the object is not organization, but education. The greater centralization of functions in the president, with all its advantages, has been at the expense of the free and proper exercise of the functions both of faculties and corporations. But this is not all. The decline of the old col-

lege ideal, which involved as one of its corollaries a definite liberal education by means of a few common studies of central importance, has been profoundly influencing the character of our supply of professors. Less and less emphasis has been placed on the general make-up of the man, and more and more on his specialized knowledge. The destructive theory that a professor is solely a teacher or investigator, and no longer a whole man, has shorn him of a priceless part of his academic citizenship. This view has been followed by its sequel, that the professor is concerned only with his specialty. And so not only have we been acquiescing in the view that his intensive special knowledge of one subject or part of a subject is properly accompanied by an extensive general ignorance of other subjects, but we have been cheerfully accepting professors who are almost totally blind in regard to the affairs of university education. Professors have been going by such differing paths of preliminary training into their several by-paths of special study that they are not only getting far apart intellectually, but find they have no one common ground to which they may ever return and meet in full fellowship. It is the very satire of our history that along with centralization of the presidential functions and the constitution of elaborate machinery to keep things working together, there has been a corresponding dispersion, from another cause, of the men who most need to stand constantly together in counselling for the best good of their universities. This must be changed, if our faculties are to consist more and more of men of all-round ability, men who are able to see and fit to solve larger questions with the moderation of wisdom. This means a renewal and better realization of the old college ideal which aimed to turn boys, not first

of all into merchants or bankers or lawyers or professors as such, but into well-balanced self-directing strong men. If this standard shall be restored to its primacy, we shall see in operation a force indispensable for the production of professors who are fit to be free. Meanwhile, recognizing the full rights of all parties involved, and recognizing further the need of beginning without delay, the all important thing just now is to revive in vigor the democracy of the faculty. This means that it is the duty of every member to take part and make his voice heard in the business of the faculty, without arrogance and without fear, until such time as it becomes clear to his colleagues that he is not fit. Then he should subside. How shall we ever be educated as faculty members unless this attempt is made? There will be some time wasted. Unwise suggestions will find utterance. They will meet with their natural corrective in the criticism of others. It will be well worth while. One priceless result will be that whatever the faculty does will be its own free act. With this will come the sobering influence of responsibility to make all men who are not without sense use their liberty sensibly. Other good things will follow. A living tradition in things intellectual and moral will be established, a self-renewing tradition that will enable the university to exhibit to the world with some show of definiteness and continuity the ideals for which it stands. These are the only traditions that have a chance to outlast the men who make them.

To this end committees and executive officers, such as deans, heads of departments and chairmen, should really be the choice of the faculty, even though the president names them. All committees and all officers used by the faculty in its service should be accountable to the

faculty and their reports and proposals should be freely debated.

But what, it may be asked, is to happen in case a faculty and its president do not agree? A presidential veto is no remedy here. So far as I can learn, it has never been used with satisfaction to any one concerned. What then? I see only one way. If, after debate, a faculty persists in its action, the right of the president, on recording his dissent, to take the whole matter for review to the corporation should be a matter of course, and unless the faculty is overwhelmingly against the president, a wise corporation will usually sustain him. But nothing will have been smothered. The voice of the faculty will have been heard, and responsibility will be placed on the president and corporation, where it belongs. Contrariwise if the president accedes to some faculty action he does not approve, but does not think needs to be taken to the corporation, then again the responsibility is placed where it belongs. If it turns out that the action of the faculty was wise, the responsibility is rightly placed on the faculty, and the president wins approval for his considerateness. If it turns out that the action of the faculty was unwise, then again the responsibility is rightly placed on the faculty and the president's opinion gains new weight. We do not need more machinery. We need this common understanding. It will make steadily for justice, peace, freedom and efficiency.

No university ever acquires true grandeur unless its faculty is made up of free men. No faculty discharges its duty happily and amply unless it is entirely free to propose and debate what it thinks right, and finally, no self-respecting faculty will do other than help its president, whether it happens to agree with him or not, so

long as he devotes himself faithfully to his arduous task. That task is to promote among his colleagues, his students, and all whom his university can influence, the intellectual and moral freedom of men. And so I return to the opening thought: The old college ideal is the true one. We need it more than ever to save our universities,—presidents, trustees, professors, students and alumni, and all whom they can influence—from the degrading personal and official servility that comes from commercializing our higher education.

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